American Red Cross Text-Book On Home Hygiene and Care of the Sick

Delano Jane A
AMERICAN RED CROSS TEXTBOOK
ON
ELEMENTARY HYGIENE
AND
HOME CARE OF THE SICK

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PREFACE

One of the most significant facts in the march of human progress during the last decade is the great awakening of public interest in the questions of health. Work as hard as they might, neither the medical nor nursing professions could alone accomplish much along sanitary lines until the people in general became aroused to the importance of such matters. Knowledge that personal health depends largely upon the health conditions of the community brings home to each individual a serious personal interest and sense of responsibility.

In the Red Cross First Aid textbooks, not a little space is devoted to instructions for the prevention of accidents. In the textbook herewith presented, a reference to the topics of the lessons will reveal the fact that half of the book is given up to such practical subjects as lead to the prevention of disease. This study of elementary hygiene in connection with the person, the household and the community, shows that in the estimation of its authors, prevention is of the first and utmost importance.
PREFACE

But in spite of the strongest barriers yet devised, disease cannot always be kept out. To the gentle hands of woman belongs the care of the sick, and every woman should realize that the time may come when such a care will be hers. This does not mean she should fit herself for professional service by long years of hard study in hospital training schools, but it does mean she should learn the simple and valuable lessons this book can teach her for the care of the sick in her own home.

As a great humane and patriotic institution devoted to the mitigation of suffering for the sake of humanity and the upbuilding of a strong and vigorous people, the American Red Cross heartily recommends to all women the practical and helpful knowledge to be gained from this book.

MABEL T. BOARDMAN,
Chairman, National Relief Board,
American Red Cross
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WASHINGTON, D. C.
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INTRODUCTION

Of all the factors which affect the welfare and happiness of the human race probably none is so important as good health; without a vigorous body, man's efficiency, comfort and happiness are disturbed or destroyed altogether. The earliest recorded history, notably the Old Testament, contains references to the diseases which afflicted men, theories as to their causes and suggestions for their prevention and relief; and from those days until ours, thoughtful men have devoted their lives to the same subjects.

In the Biblical time a patient was described as being "possessed of the devil" when his poor body suffered from those unseen forces, some of which even to this day defy the greatest scientists to reveal. Theories of the most absurd and grotesque character prevailed and still find lodgment in unintelligent minds as to the causes of disease, and it has only been slowly step by step that the mysterious causes have been brought to light by the studious men who have never failed in any generation to carry on the researches begun by their predecessors, nor to add something to the sum of scientific knowledge.
During the nineteenth century an almost complete revolution of all former theories occurred, when the discovery was made that many diseases were due to certain microscopic organisms, whose existence had long been recognized, but whose purpose had not been understood. Certain of these organisms were also found to be of vital importance in many familiar processes going on about us, such as fermentation, putrefaction, and some of the changes in plant life. Doubtless the benefits which accrue to man from their activities are greater than the harm done by the species which are found to be the cause of disease.

Because these microscopic organisms are so closely related to nearly all that pertains to health and disease, and particularly to the routine habits of our daily lives, it seems necessary for every one to have some understanding of their origin, development and, in the case of the germs of disease, of their danger. With this in view these notes on bacteria and the transmission of disease which have become common knowledge are given. The serious study of bacteriology will never go on far outside the laboratory of the scientist, but intelligent men and women can not fail to be interested in the manifestations of unseen life, which may seriously affect their own welfare.

Many years ago Florence Nightingale said that